2020-21 Michigan Public Act 601 of 2018 (A-F Grades) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Contents

Michigan School Grades (A-F) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

School Grades Report on MI School Data – Preview Window

I am a school administrator; how do I gain authorized user access to the School Grades report for a school?

If you are a school administrator seeking access to the preview window of the School Grades Report in MI School Data before its public release, you must have a secure MI School Data account approved by your school's district. To request MI School Data accountability access for a school:

- Go to the MI School Data login page.
- Enter your MI School Data username and password.
  1. To reset your password for an existing MI School Data user account, use the "Forgot Password" link on the login page.
  2. To create a new MI School Data Accountability User account and to obtain access as an "Accountability User," please contact your ISD Accountability administrator identified in the list at https://www.michigan.gov/documents/cepi/MISchoolData_ISDContacts_572230_7.pdf.

Detailed instructions on accessing School Grades Reports can be found at www.mi.gov/mde-schoolgrades. The instructions document also includes information on downloading and working with Accountability Student Datafiles on MI School Data, as the Accountability Student Datafiles for the School Index can also be used to support the assessment-based indicators on the new School Grades Report.

How can concerns regarding my school's letter grades and rankings be addressed?

During the School Grades Report preview window, schools or districts may contact MDE-Accountability@michigan.gov or call 877-560-8378, option 3 with questions or concerns regarding their school's letter grades and rankings on MI School Data.

The data for my school is incorrect in one or more indicators, can that be corrected at this point?

Issues relating to school data entry/submission will not be considered during the School Grades Report preview window. Each data indicator included in the School Grades Report has had its own submission/review window, in its respective source data system. Schools and districts were able to make necessary corrections to the staff, student, and course-level data during their respective submission/review windows. The availability of each indicator's review windows is communicated to the individual school and district personnel which the districts reported as the appropriate contacts for that role in the state's Educational Entity Master (EEM). All source data are considered accurate and final at the time of the School Grades Report preview window and no further requests to change to these data will be considered.

School Grades Report on MI School Data – Public Release

Will School Grades Report results be made public?

Yes, after the preview window offered to school administrators, reports will be publicly available on www.mischooldata.org and www.mi.gov/mde-accountability. Schools and districts will be able to share these public reports with staff, at public local school board meetings, and with parents.

Impacts of COVID

Have there been any changes made to the School Grades Report because of the COVID-19 pandemic?
Yes and no.

No, the 2020-21 School Grades *report* and its business rules have not been altered because of COVID-19, the suspension of state assessments in 2019-20, or the waiving of federal accountability requirements in 2019-20 and 2020-21.

Yes, the *data* feeding into the report have been impacted by COVID-19.

- For 2019-20, only 3 of 8 School Grades components had data to be reported because 2019-20 state assessments were suspended (except for WIDA).

- For 2020-21, participation on spring 2021 state assessments was much lower than normal because of the suspension of the federal requirement to assess at least 95% of students.

  Consequently, 2020-21 School Grades results should be used with caution. When reviewing indicators based on state assessments, including Proficiency, Growth, Performance among Peers and Student Subgroup Performance, it is important to check the Assessment Participation indicator. A low participation rate will have an impact on a school's assessment-based indicators and lead to the question of "Which students did not participate? Do these students have common characteristics such as qualifying for free or reduced-priced lunches, receiving Special Education services, or race/ethnicity?

- For 2020-21, the student growth measure had to be adjusted to accommodate both for (1) the lack of 2019-20 state assessment results and (2) large amounts of non-random non-participation in Spring 2020-21 state assessments.
  1. Test sequencing
     - 2020-21 student growth scores (Student Growth Percentiles; SGPs) were calculated using assessment results from Spring 2019 and Spring 2021 for most students. This was because Spring 2020 state assessments were not given and so did not have results. Normally, growth is calculated using assessment results from the immediately prior two years.
     - Michigan's growth model (SGPs) is capable of providing non-adjacent, or skip-year, growth scores. In fact, this feature has been used for years to calculate growth from students' 8th grade test to their grade 11 test.
  2. Norms
     - 2020-21 student growth scores (SGPs) and growth targets (Adequate Growth Percentiles; AGPs) were calculated by comparing results to norms of a prior skip-year test sequence (from Spring 2017 to Spring 2019). This was done to ensure the norms used were representative of the whole state. Spring 2021 state assessments had a large degree of non-random non-participation and so norms from the current skip-year test sequence (Spring 2019 to Spring 2021) would not have been representative of the whole state and so were not used.

School Grades Report – General

Why is MDE releasing school letter grades and rankings?
Public Act 601 of 2018 requires the MDE to annually grade and rank schools based on performance indicators prescribed within the law.

Who determined the grade and rank cut scores/scales for each of the indicators?
Cut scores or scales for grades and labels were initially developed by a standard-setting committee. The committee was comprised of Michigan educators and was facilitated by an organization with expertise in this work. The State Board of Education (SBE) considered the standard-setting committee's recommended cut scores and refined some of the committee's recommendations.

Why are the grade and rank scales for each indicator different?
The grading and ranking scales used for each of the indicators is different due to the data and other information used by both the standard-setting committee and SBE in considering what scales fit best with each indicator. For example, P.A. 601 describes one criterion of an underperforming school as having a graduation rate below 67%. The standard-setting committee and SBE took this into consideration when setting the scale for the graduation rate indicator. Not all indicators in the School Grades system have legal criteria that may act as a constraint on the grading or ranking scale. In these cases, the SBE and the standard-setting committee could consider other information such as the distribution of schools' performance within an indicator.

Why isn't there an overall letter grade determined for my school?
Public Act 601 of 2018 requires the MDE to annually grade and rank individual performance indicators prescribed within the law. The law does not require an overall grade to be determined. Individual indicators use a letter grade or ranking label to summarize a school's performance:

Indicator Label Type	Indicator
Letter Grade	Student Proficiency
	Student Growth
	Graduation
	English Learner Progress
	Performance Among Peers
Ranking Label	Student Subgroup Performance
	On-Track Attendance
	Assessment Participation
Summary Status Label (Alternative Education Campus Schools only)	Legislative Compliance
	Progress Toward Goals

How are school grades and rankings determined for "new" schools?
A school that has been open since July 1 of the beginning of the school year being evaluated should have all indicators except for graduation rate as graduation rates lag a year for inclusion in school

accountability results due to the extended period of time that schools and intermediate school districts are allowed to review the audit graduation rate data.

School Letter Grades

What letter grades are used?
P.A. 601 requires MDE to use letter grades including A, B, C, D, and F. Schools earning an A are performing at the higher end of the grading scale while schools earning an F are performing at the lower end of the grading scale.

What are the grading scales?
The grading scales tie a school's performance in a specific indicator to a corresponding letter grade. The table below shows the range of values in each of the indicators mapped to a corresponding letter grade.

Letter Grades	Student Proficiency	Student Growth	Graduation	English Learner Progress	Performance Among Peers
A	55 or higher	55 or higher	90 or higher	60 or higher	0.89 or higher
B	40 to 54.99	40 to 54.99	80 to 89.99	45 to 59.99	0.48 to 0.88
C	23 to 39.99	25 to 39.99	70 to 79.99	25 to 44.99	-0.15 to 0.47
D	10 to 22.99	10 to 24.99	67 to 69.99	10 to 24.99	-0.84 to -0.14
F	Below 10	Below 10	Below 67	Below 10	Below -0.84

School Rankings

What is a ranking label?
P.A. 601 requires MDE to use ranking labels to summarize schools' performance in certain indicators. The ranking labels are like letter grades in that they summarize a school's performance using a scale. Ranking labels include Significantly Above Average, Above Average, Average, Below Average, and Significantly Below Average. Schools earning a ranking label of Significantly Above Average indicate the school is performing at the higher end of the ranking label scale while schools earning a ranking label of Significantly Below Average are performing at the lower end of the ranking label scale.

What are the ranking label scales?
The ranking label scales tie a school's performance in a specific indicator to a corresponding ranking label. The table below shows the range of values in each of the indicators mapped to a corresponding ranking label.

Ranking Label	On-Track Attendance	Assessment Participation	Student Subgroup Performance
Significantly Above Average	94 or higher	90 or higher	1.00 or lower
Above Average	88 – 93.99	80 – 89.99	1.01 – 1.25
Average	76.5 – 87.99	70 – 79.99	1.26 – 1.50
Below Average	55 – 76.49	60 – 69.99	1.51 – 1.90
Significantly Below Average	Below 55	Below 60	1.91 or higher

Indicators

Student Proficiency

What is student proficiency?
The student proficiency indicator shows the percentage of students enrolled in a school scoring high enough on a state assessment to be considered proficient.

Which students are included in this indicator?
Only students who have been enrolled in the school for a full academic year and in an assessed grade (3-8, 11) are included in this indicator. A full academic year is determined by how often the student is reported by the school in the state's student enrollment system. Students reported by a school as enrolled in the fall, spring, and assessment window counts are enrolled for a full academic year. Non-public and homeschooled students are not included in this calculation.

Which state assessments are included in this indicator?
M-STEP (grades 3-7), PSAT (grade 8), SAT (grade 11), and MI-Access Functional Independence, Supported Independence, and Participation (grades 3-8, 11)

Which subjects are included in this indicator?
Math and English Language Arts (ELA). P.A. 601 does not require the inclusion of scores from the Science and Social Studies assessments.

How is this indicator calculated?
Calculating the percentage of students proficient in a school is relatively straightforward. It is the number of students proficient divided by the number of students enrolled for a full academic year. This calculation is done for each subject (math and ELA), and the average of these two percentages is taken and mapped to a letter grade.

Student Growth

What is student growth?
The student growth indicator shows the percentage of students enrolled in a school demonstrating adequate growth on state assessments.

Which students are included in this indicator?
Only students who have been enrolled in the school for a full academic year and who have at least two years of assessment scores been included in this indicator (grades 4-8, 11). A full academic year is determined by how often the student is reported by the school in the state's student enrollment system. Students reported by a school as enrolled in the fall, spring, and assessment window counts are enrolled for a full academic year. Non-public and homeschooled students are not included in this calculation.

Which state assessments are included in this indicator?
M-STEP (grades 3-7), PSAT (grade 8), SAT (grade 11), and MI-Access Functional Independence (grades 3-8, 11). Assessments given in third grade are used to generate growth scores for students after they take the fourth-grade assessment. Third-grade scores alone, do not generate a growth score.

Which subjects are included in this indicator?
Math and English Language Arts (ELA). P.A. 601 does not require the inclusion of scores from the Science and Social Studies assessments.

How is this indicator calculated?
Calculating the percentage of students demonstrating adequate growth in a school is relatively straightforward. It is the number of students demonstrating adequate growth divided by the number of students enrolled for a full academic year. This calculation is done for each subject (math and ELA), and the average of these two percentages is taken and mapped to a letter grade.

How is adequate growth calculated?
See more information on growth here:
https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Meeting_Adequate_Growth_614836_7.pdf

Graduation

What is graduation?
The graduation indicator shows the percentage of students who have graduated from school after four, five, and six years. Schools earn a grade for their highest graduation rate out of the four-, five-, or six-year rates.

Which students are included in this indicator?
The graduation indicator utilizes graduation rate data calculated by the Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI). For information about which students count toward or against graduation rates please see:
https://www.michigan.gov/documents/cepi/Understanding_Michigans_Cohort_Grad-Drop_Rates_599718_7.pdf

What happens if my school doesn't graduate students?
Schools that do not graduate students, either by virtue of being a school configured to have only K-11 grades or as an ISD school ineligible for graduation rates, will not earn a letter grade for the graduation indicator.

How is this indicator calculated?
A letter grade is earned based on the highest of the four-, five, or six-year graduation rates. Graduation rates are calculated by CEPI, and the calculation methodology for graduation rates is explained in detail here: https://www.michigan.gov/documents/cepi/Understanding_Michigans_Cohort_Grad-Drop_Rates_599718_7.pdf.

For schools with students participating in a Shared Educational Entity (SEE) or Specialized Shared Educational Entity (S2E2) for school accountability and reporting, graduation rates are now re-aggregated from the student-level by Building Pupil Otherwise Attend (where applicable and reported)—the MSDS characteristic that defines where students participating in the Sending Scores Back Program should be attributed to for accountability reporting purposes. This is new for 2020-21 School Grades reports, utilizing graduation rates from the 2019-20 school year. For participating students where no Building Pupil Otherwise Attend characteristic was reported OR the Building Pupil Otherwise Attend matched the student's building enrollment of record in CEPI's student cohort data, standard graduation record aggregation rules apply.

Performance Among Peers

What is performance among peers?
This indicator compares a school's student proficiency with an average consisting of up to 30 similar schools' student proficiency.

How are similar or peer schools determined?
Three characteristics are used to find similar schools:

- The percent of students in a school receiving free lunches
- The percent of students with disabilities in a school
- The enrollment size of a school

Each of these characteristics looks at a student's full-time equivalency (FTE) value for more precision.

Schools are also grouped by grade spans (elementary, middle, high) so that an elementary school will be compared to other elementary schools and not high schools.

What is the full-time equivalency (FTE)?
FTE is the proportion of instructional hours of service claimed for a student by a school.

Where did the factors and weights come from in determining peer schools/similar schools?
The State Board of Education requested the characteristics to determine the peer/similar school groups and the characteristic weighting formula used for the School Grades.

Why is the list of Peer Schools different on the School Grades report when compared to the list of peer/similar schools on the Parent Dashboard for School Transparency?
An important thing to note when comparing the similar schools used on the Parent Dashboard versus the peer schools in the Performance Among Peers indicator of the School Grades report is that the school characteristics and characteristic weighting formula used to determine the groups of similar schools are different. The School Grades system uses 70% percent of students eligible for free lunch student FTE, 20% percent of students with disabilities FTE, 10% student headcount FTE. The Parent Dashboard's formula uses 50% student headcount FTE, 20% percent of students eligible for free OR reduced lunch, 15% student-teacher ratio, and 15% expenditure per student.

How is this indicator calculated?
Several steps are involved in creating peer groups:

1. A standard score, or z-score, is created for each of the three school characteristics (free lunch, students with disabilities, enrollment). The z-score shows how far from the average a characteristic is for a specific school.
2. Each of the three z-scores for a school is weighted and then aggregated. Characteristic weights are: 70% free lunch; 20% students with disabilities; 10% enrollment
3. Schools are grouped by similar grade spans and then sorted within these grade spans by the closeness of the aggregated value found in step two.

After the peer groups are created, student proficiency can be compared between a school and its peer group of similar schools. The comparison is done using z-scores, and schools with positive values will be

above average and earn higher grades than schools with negative values that are below average and earn lower grades.

English Learner Progress

What is 'English Learner' progress?
This indicator shows the percentage of students who are English learners enrolled in a school who are proficient or demonstrate adequate growth in the state's English language proficiency assessment.

Which students are included in this indicator?
Only English Learner (EL) students who have been enrolled in the school for a full academic year and in an assessed grade (K-12) are included in this indicator. A full academic year is determined by how often the student is reported by the school in the state's student enrollment system. Students reported by a school as enrolled in the fall, spring, and assessment window counts are enrolled for a full academic year. Non-public and homeschooled students are not included in this calculation.

English Learners with at least two years of assessment scores may also be included in the adequate growth portion of this indicator if they are not already demonstrating proficiency.

Which state assessments are included in this indicator?
WIDA-Access (K-12). Assessments given in kindergarten are used to generate growth scores for students after they take the first-grade assessment. Kindergarten scores alone, do not generate a growth score.

Which subjects are included in this indicator?
The overall WIDA-Access score is used. English Learners demonstrate their acquisition of the English language through testing on reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

How is this indicator calculated?
The percentage of EL students proficient or showing adequate growth in a school is the number of EL students demonstrating adequate growth or proficiency in WIDA-Access divided by the number of students enrolled for a full academic year. The resulting percentage is mapped to a letter grade.

How is adequate growth calculated?
See more information on growth here:
https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Meeting_Adequate_Growth_614836_7.pdf

Assessment Participation

What is assessment participation?
This indicator shows the percentage of students enrolled in a school who received a valid test score.

Which students are included in this indicator?
Any students enrolled in an assessed grade (3-8, 11, 12) are included in this indicator. 12th-grade students are included only if they have not taken a state assessment in 11th grade. Non-public and homeschooled students are not included in this calculation.

Which state assessments are included in this indicator?
M-STEP (grades 3-7), PSAT (grade 8), SAT (grade 11), and MI-Access Functional Independence, Supported Independence, and Participation (grades 3-8, 11)

Which subjects are included in this indicator?
Math and English Language Arts (ELA). P.A. 601 does not require the inclusion of scores from the Science and Social Studies assessments.

How does the 95% participation rule apply to the School Grades system?
P.A. 601 is a state law that does not meet federal requirements. While the federal requirement for schools to test 95% of their students is still in force for the federal accountability system, there is no 95% participation requirement for the state School Grades accountability system.

How is this indicator calculated?
A school's participation rate is calculated by dividing the number of valid test scores by student enrollment in the assessed grades. This calculation is done for each subject (math and ELA), and the average of these two percentages is taken and mapped to a ranking label.

On-Track Attendance

What is on-track attendance?
This indicator shows the percentage of students enrolled in a school who are not chronically absent.

Which students are included in this indicator?
Any students enrolled in a school for more than 10 days in any grade K-12. Non-public and homeschooled students are not included in this calculation.

How is this indicator calculated?
A school's on-track attendance rate is calculated by dividing the number of students enrolled for at least 10 days and being reported in attendance for at least 90% of the students' enrolled days by the number of students enrolled for at least 10 days. A ranking label is then mapped to this value.

Student Subgroup Performance

What is student subgroup performance?
This indicator shows the proficiency of a school's subgroups relative to the corresponding state averages. Values closest to 1.0 indicate the school's subgroups are performing above or relatively close to state averages. Values farther from 1.0 indicate the school's subgroups are underperforming relative to the state averages.

Which students are included in this indicator?
Only students who have been enrolled in the school for a full academic year and in an assessed grade (3-8, 11) are included in this indicator. A full academic year is determined by how often the student is reported by the school in the state's student enrollment system. Students reported by a school as enrolled in the fall, spring, and assessment window counts are enrolled for a full academic year. Non-public and homeschooled students are not included in this calculation.

What are student subgroups?

Students are categorized into subgroups based on demographic characteristics or participation in certain programs. Students can be counted in more than one subgroup. For example, a student who is Asian and receives free or reduced-price lunch would be counted in the Asian subgroup and the Economically Disadvantaged subgroup. Student subgroups are based on federal definitions and include:

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Two or More Races
- White
- Economically Disadvantaged
- English Learners
- Students with Disabilities

Are all student subgroups included in this indicator?

Only student subgroups with 30 or more students are included in a school's subgroup performance comparison.

How is this indicator calculated?

A school's subgroup performance is compared with corresponding subgroup performance at the state level. Scores are generated based on a weighted index calculated using each school's number of student subgroups and each of those subgroups' differences from the corresponding state-level subgroup. Lower scores represent school subgroup performance above or near the state average. Higher scores represent school subgroup performance below the state average.

Why do subgroup z-scores get translated into a deviation rating? Why isn't the ranking label applied to the z-scores?

School-level, subgroup z-scores are translated into a deviation rating using an additional scale before receiving a final rank for the school overall. The additional rating scale, or "deviation rating" is applied to help differentiate the end school-level values when subgroup data are combined. This is done because when averaging a school's subgroup z-scores to produce the school's overall value to be ranked, most schools' subgroup z-scores averaged close to 0—making it hard to apply a ranking scale around the average of the z-scores themselves.

Reports for Alternative Education Campuses

How are School Grades reports different for alternative education campuses?

Alternative education campus schools do not receive letter grades or rankings. Instead, they receive a summary status of either Summary Status Met, for schools meeting the law and making meaningful, measurable academic progress, or Summary Status Not Met, for schools not meeting the law and/or not making meaningful, measurable academic progress.

My school is alternative, how come we received letter grades and not a report based only on compliance?

Only schools which met the inclusion criteria for alternative education campuses, and which submit the required certification through the Grant Electronic Monitoring System (GEMS), receive the alternate designation. Additional details on how eligibility for alternative education campus status was determined can be found in the technical business rules at www.mi.gov/mde-schoolgrades.

What makes a school eligible for an alternative school report instead of letter grades and rankings?

Center programs, strict discipline academies, adjudicated youth facilities and schools providing an alternative education program to 90% or more of students are eligible for the alternative education campus designation. Additional details on how eligibility for alternative education campus status was determined can be found in the technical business rules at www.mi.gov/mde-schoolgrades.

My school is an alternative education campus. How come we received letter grades and not a report based only on compliance factors?

A school that meets the inclusion criteria for alternative education campuses, but which received letter grades, did not submit the required certification through the Grant Electronic Monitoring System (GEMS) and therefore was defaulted to receive school grades and rankings as any other public school.

My alternative education campus has additional data for the 2020-21 School Grades cycle. What prompted the change?

The legislation for school grades requires analysis of alternative education campus performance against academic goals, in order to receive a summary status of either Met (for schools meeting the law and making academic progress) or Not Met (for schools not meeting the law and/or not making academic progress). The 2020-21 cycle was the first opportunity to implement the academic progress portion of the state law.

My alternative education campus does not have academic goal data prior to the 2020-21 School Grades cycle. Why not?

Alternative accountability academic goal data was not available in the 2019-20 school grades release due to assessment waivers related to Covid-19. The 2018-19 school grades release did not yet have sufficient data for the academic goal portion for alternative education campuses in the A-F grading system. Academic goal data were collected for 2020-21 and will be collected and reported going forward.

School Recognition and Support Identification

Will the School Grades report be used to identify the bottom 5% of schools?

Yes, in future years when Michigan is in a naming year for Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) schools, the MDE will identify schools receiving an "F" in all the student proficiency, student growth, and performance among peers indicators as state-CSI schools.

I thought the School Index system was used to identify the bottom 5% of schools. How is the School Grades system different?

Unfortunately, P.A. 601 was not written in a way that allows for a single set of bottom 5% of schools. Differences in federal and state requirements for identifying the bottom 5% of schools make two sets of

identified schools necessary. The School Index system will continue to be used to comply with existing federal requirements for identifying low performing schools while the new School Grades system will be used to comply with new state requirements for identifying low performing schools.

CSI Identification Criteria	School Index System (Federal)	School Grades System (State)
Academic	Having an overall index value within the lowest 5% of all overall index values in the state	Having a letter grade of "F" in each of the following indicators: Proficiency; Growth; Performance Among Peers
Graduation Rate	Having a four-year graduation rate at or below 67%	Having a four-year graduation rate below 67%

How often are schools identified as state-CSI schools?
Schools will be identified as state-CSI schools every three years beginning in late fall 2022.

How are schools recognized as Reward Schools?
A public school that meets any of the following will be identified as a Reward School:

- It is a high school that graduates at least 99% of its pupils.
- Receives the highest grade on any of the following indicators: proficiency, growth, or performance among peers.
- Must not already be identified as a low-performing school or school with an underperforming subgroup

To be eligible, the school must meet the minimum n-size for the respective indicator in order to receive a school grade.

How often are schools recognized as Reward Schools?
Reward schools are identified annually. Schools identified as Reward schools keep the status for one accountability cycle – typically an academic year.

Does the School Grades system identify schools for any other issues?
No. The School Grades system only identifies low-performing (state-CSI) and high-performing (Reward) schools.

Additional Resources and Contact Information

Where can I find additional resources about the School Grades Report, including guides, grade and rank cut scores, presentations, and other information?
For more information, visit the Michigan School Grades System resource page at
www.michigan.gov/mde-schoolgrades.

Who can I email or call for help with my School Grades Report?
For questions, concerns, or feedback about the content of the School Grades Report, please contact the Michigan Department of Education at MDE-Accountability@michigan.gov. Assistance with this can also be reached by calling 877-560-8378, option 3.

For website technical/navigation issues, please contact the Center for Educational Performance Information at cepi@michigan.gov.